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ABSENTEEISM: A SCHOOL GROUP SURVEY

by



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A THESIS  
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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Absenteeism: A School Group Survey" submitted by James Joseph Wojcicki in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.





## ABSTRACT

This study undertook to conduct a survey of a group of students who were recognized as absentees by a school. The study consists of two parts. The first part concerned itself with establishing the attitude of the absentees to education, the school and school practices. The second part concerned itself with characteristics of absentees and explanations of expressed causes of absenteeism.

An established instrument was used in Part I of the study. Part II of the study was developed by a list of questions serving as a guide. Data were tabulated from both written and taped documentation.

The findings indicated that absentees exhibited a negative attitude toward school and school processes even though they realized the necessity of obtaining an education. The data showed that there were several factors within the school setting which contributed to the attitudes of absentees and consequently the problem of absenteeism. Findings further indicated that although absentees were aware of the consequences of truancy there was no motivation or direction from within the school or themselves to overcome influences contributing to absenteeism.

The study indicated the need for further research within the area of absenteeism. Closer examinations should be made of the school organization and school practices and their relationship to absenteeism. Possible application and use of industrial practices might be beneficial in promoting changes within the school setting that will reduce the problem of absenteeism.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

#### I. INTRODUCTION

A common definition of absenteeism, according to most sources of references, is the practice of absenting frequently or without good reason.

Various studies have been conducted to examine the relationship of parental, socio-economic, psychological and environmental influences to absenteeism. Each of these studies has added fragments to the total picture of absenteeism. However, there is no evidence to support any one of these influences as being the single, most important cause of absenteeism. Research suggests that the concept of absenteeism is a product of a galaxy of factors. It will probably be some time before the dynamics of absenteeism will have been investigated to the point where a comprehensive picture of this phenomenon can be presented.

#### II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of the research reported here was to determine particular characteristics of a segment of an absentee population in a school setting.

##### Specific Problems

The problem consisted of two parts:

1. Part I was designed to determine what attitude the absentee



had toward education, the school and school practices.

2. Part II was designed to:

- a) Determine the reasons for the attitude exhibited by the absentee.
- b) Determine any significant characteristics common to absentees.

The study reported here examined aspects relating to absenteeism not yet thoroughly investigated, with the expectation of contributing to the total comprehensive picture of absenteeism.

### III. HYPOTHESES

For the purposes of this research it was hypothesized that:

- A. An absentee will exhibit a negative attitude toward education, the school and school practices. The term "negative" was taken to mean some degree of non-preference as defined by the test instrument used.
- B. An observable pattern of characteristics exists that describe the absentee.

### IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### Absenteeism

The term "absenteeism" was defined as the practice of absenting frequently or without good reason from school. Synonymous with "absenteeism" was the term "truancy".

#### Absentee

The term "absentee" was defined as one who absents frequently or without good reason from school. Synonymous with "absentee" was the term "truant".





## Attitude

The following definition of "attitude" was selected for use in the study reported here.

A relatively enduring system of evaluative, affective reactions based upon and reflecting the evaluative concepts or beliefs which have been learned about the characteristics of a social object or class of social objects.<sup>1</sup>

By the term "evaluative" Shaw and Wright mean some order of preference and non-preference. The term "beliefs" is taken to emphasize some level of acceptance of an assumption toward an object or event.

## V. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The subjects studied in the investigation reported here were students who, according to the School Act<sup>2</sup> were not of legal age to terminate school. In such cases the school does not have the option of expulsion to exercise over the students.

The subjects used represented a good cross section of factors; namely, academic achievement, programs, personality and socio-economic levels.

The researcher determined that students who had committed at least two offenses of truancy were eligible for inclusion in the investigation reported here. One instance of absenteeism did not justify the subject's identification as a possible absentee. The reason for this was that after one experience in truancy the subject who committed a second (or more) offenses, was aware of the consequences, yet in some way was

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw and Wright, Scales for the Measurement of Attitudes, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Incorporated, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Alberta, Department of Education, School Act, (Edmonton, L.S. Wall, Queen's Printer, 1967), pp. 144-145.



motivated to repeat the offense.

The school in which the study was carried out is one of the largest composite high schools in the city of Edmonton. Student enrollment numbered 2,457 with a teaching staff of 149. The school provided three program areas; academic, technical and business. Successful completion of one of these programs would result in either a High School Diploma, a University Entrance standing or a Vocational Certificate.

The truancy policy is defined for the students and teachers in handbooks that are distributed at the beginning of each school term. This is described in Chapter III under Methodology.

## VI. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Justification for the need to investigate the phenomenon of absenteeism is diverse. Research suggests that students with higher frequencies of absenteeism suffer, to some extent, in academic performance. Investigations of absenteeism, in addition to determining the effect of attendance upon academic performance, may uncover useful information that will assist in the solution of the problem of poor academic achievement.

A great deal of the socialization process of the student takes place within the environment of the school. Here, relationships are formed, ideas are exchanged, values are influenced and there is participation in many phases of like processes such as responsibility, cooperation, social activity and competition. The persistent truant usually has problems in these areas. Research indicates that attendance records could provide a basis for identifying "problem" students and for instituting further investigation and referral.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, to whatever

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<sup>3</sup> D. Rogers and Grace Reese (U. Pittsburg), "Health Studies - presumably normal high school students: 11 Absence from school", American Journal of Diseases of Children, (1965), 109 (1), pp. 2-27.



extent the student's socialization process is influenced by the school environment, then to that extent it may be said that absenteeism is an influencing factor and should be investigated.

Similarly, it may be said that absenteeism could provide an index toward identifying students with personal, academic, adjustment, physical and mental problems which are kept submerged. Research has been conducted which suggests the value of absenteeism as an identifying medium of latent problem situations.<sup>4</sup> At times it is very difficult for a student to approach a counselling authority with a problem. The difficulty is further compounded by the student's hesitancy to talk about it. This is not to say that absenteeism would definitely point out such cases but that it may assist in getting the student in contact with a counsellor, and secondly, absenteeism may be the catalyst in getting the student to talk about his problem. Expediency in contact with such problems is necessary to reduce or eliminate possible negative repercussions such as delinquency or premature leaving of school.

Chapter II deals with a review of the literature relevant to absenteeism both within the school setting and the industrial setting. Description of the research design and instrumentation used is outlined in Chapter III. The data collected are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V contains conclusions of the study, discussion of the conclusions and recommendations for additional investigation.

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<sup>4</sup> Rogers and Rease, op.cit., pp. 9-27.





## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of absenteeism is relatively unexplored in the educational setting. It receives more attention in industry.

#### II. REVIEW

Maurice J. Tyerman conducted several research projects regarding truancy. One of his studies, "A Research into Truancy", included 137 children of a Welsh industrial town classified as truants by court action. A representative sample of 40 truants was subjected to intensive psychological and sociological examination and the results were compared with those of a control group of non-truants. Outstanding among the variables related to truancy was inferior environment, with absence of comfortable and secure home influence. Tyerman found that truants in his sample were lower than average in intelligence and school attainment. The persistent truant was usually a lonely, insecure, unhappy child. Corrective measures required individual intensive study of the truant with cooperation from parents an essential factor.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Maurice J. Tyerman, "A Research into Truancy", British Journal of Educational Psychology, XXVIII (November, 1958), pp. 217-225.





A study conducted by Rogers and Reese<sup>6</sup> in which frequency, cause and pupil characteristics related to absence were studied in a high school population, concluded that high frequency of absence was associated with low academic performance and low participation in activities. It was also suggested in this study that problem children be identified by high absence incidence. Tyerman,<sup>7</sup> Hersov,<sup>8</sup> Hinkle et al,<sup>9</sup> Murphy et al,<sup>10</sup> Jacobziner<sup>11</sup> have supported this observation by similar studies.

Hersov studied records of 150 children; 50 children who refused to attend school, 50 truants and 50 children used as a control population. These children were analyzed with a 124-item schedule covering such areas as family environment, school progress, and pattern of symptom. It was found that truants in Hersov's sample came from larger families where discipline was inconsistent; they more often experienced maternal absence

<sup>6</sup> Rogers and Reese, op.cit., pp. 9-27.

<sup>7</sup> Tyerman, op.cit., pp. 217-225.

<sup>8</sup> L.A. Hersov, (Child Guidance Training Centre, London, England), "Persistent non-attendance at school". Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, I (1960), pp. 130-136.

<sup>9</sup> L.E. Hinkle Jr. et al, "Studies in Human Ecology: Factors Relevant to Occurrence of Bodily Illnesses and Disturbances in Mood, Thought, and Behavior in Three Homogeneous Population Groups", American Journal of Psychiatry, (September, 1957), pp. 212-219.

<sup>10</sup> G.E. Murphy et al, "Stress, Sickness and Psychiatric Disorder in "Normal" Population: Study of 101 Young Women", Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, (March, 1962), pp. 228-236.

<sup>11</sup> H. Jacobziner, "Health Services for the School-Age Child: New Approach", Journal of the American Medical Association, (November, 1957), pp. 1669-1677.



in infancy and paternal absence in childhood; their standard of work was poor and their truancy was often part of other delinquent behavior.<sup>12</sup>

Brooks et al in a study of factors affecting school attendance found a significant correlation between parental attitude toward the school and attendance by the child. It may be added that no significant relationships were found between school attendance and family income, and parental educational level.<sup>13</sup>

Tyerman,<sup>14</sup> Rogers and Reese<sup>15</sup> and Hersov<sup>16</sup> have concluded that to some extent voluntary non-attendance is a forerunner of certain negative repercussions such as delinquency and the drop-out problem.

As mentioned previously the concept of absenteeism has received more attention in industry. Elton Mayo dealt with this problem in a study of three metal working companies. It was his objective to determine causes of industrial absenteeism. Mayo's efforts produced descriptions of numerous variables contributing to industrial absenteeism. Among these were such factors as, poor working conditions, lack of efficient organization, inadequate facilities and the profound factor of human relations. Mayo's findings included the concept of group pressure as being an important influence on absenteeism. He found that the human desire for cooperative activity was indeed emphatic, and that any organization that

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<sup>12</sup> Hersov, op.cit., pp. 130-136.

<sup>13</sup> Brooks et al, "Socioeconomic factors, parental attitudes and school attendance", Social Work, (1962), 7:4, pp. 103-108.

<sup>14</sup> Tyerman, op.cit., pp. 217-225.

<sup>15</sup> Rogers and Reese, op.cit., pp. 9-27.

<sup>16</sup> Hersov, op.cit., pp. 130-136.





did not provide an opportunity for this process, would find itself with a large labor turnover and a high degree of absenteeism. In addition to group pressure, Mayo found that other factors based upon the human relations concept, such as communication, individual recognition, responsibility, positive supervision and teamwork determined to a large extent the degree of absenteeism incurred.<sup>17</sup>

A study by the Acton Society found that it was not the size of the organization but the quality of management that influenced absenteeism.<sup>18</sup> It was found that better quality management was associated with less absenteeism.

In a study conducted by Metzner and Mann, it was found that there is a correlation between attitudes of employees and their frequency of absence.<sup>19</sup> That is to say, those employees who indicated a poor attitude were those that were absent most frequently.

William Noland conducted a study in which he ranked eight items as being associated with absenteeism. These were: education, job satisfaction, workers' opinions of the efficiency of management, the number of dependents, similarity of job to formerly held jobs, age, workers' opinions of the attitude of management and home situation.<sup>20</sup>

Jerry D. Adams in an article written in Factory described the absentees as defensive, suspicious, somewhat hostile, not liking and in turn not liked by supervisors, loners, hating society and emotionally

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<sup>17</sup> Elton, Mayo, The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization, (Boston: Harvard University, 1945), pp. 87-112.

<sup>18</sup> Acton Society Trust, A Preliminary Study of Attendance at Work in Large and Small Units and A Further Study of Attendance at Work in Large and Small Units. (London: Acton Society Trust, 1953 and 1957)

<sup>19</sup> Helen Metzner and Floyd Mann, "Employee Attitudes and Absences", Personnel Psychology, VI, pp. 467-487.

<sup>20</sup> William Noland, "Worker Attitudes and Industrial Absenteeism: A Statistical Appraisal", American Sociological Review, X, (August, 1945), pp. 503-510.





inadequate to meet frustrations at home or work. Adams proposed numerous techniques for controlling absenteeism. These included: job satisfaction, promotion opportunities, recognition for good work, efficiency and interest of management and supervisory personnel, a definite absentee policy and enforcement, and proper job placement.<sup>21</sup>

Oliver R. Gibson was concerned with the many variables influencing absenteeism. Gibson felt that neither individual traits nor environmental conditions could adequately explain the diverse data on absenteeism. His conceptualization of absence behavior as based upon the need-oriented individual and the goal-oriented organization linked by a contractual process attempts to explain absence behavior. Gibson treats absence behavior as a dependent variable. The nature of the organization and the traits of the personnel are seen as independent variables. Intervening variables are the sets of events internal to the individual as related to his belief-value system. Gibson's construct identifies the intervening variables as providing the major explanatory concept.<sup>22</sup>

It is possible to observe from the review of the literature that there are numerous factors surrounding the concept of absenteeism. Each study reviewed indicated a significant association between some variable and absenteeism. According to the literature, it does not seem possible that there is any one single factor on which to base the explanation of absenteeism. Very little attention has been directed toward associating attitude with absenteeism. If it is accepted that absenteeism can be

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<sup>21</sup> Jerry D. Adams, "Twelve Ways to Cut Avoidable Absenteeism", Factory, (January, 1966), pp. 94-95.

<sup>22</sup> Oliver R. Gibson, "Toward a Conceptualization of Absence Behavior of Personnel in Organizations", Administrative Science Quarterly, II (June, 1966), pp. 107-133.



regarded as some type of overt behavior, and if it is also accepted that attitudes serve as predisposition to overt behavior, then it might be possible to investigate absenteeism within the context of attitude with the hope of finding some sort of pattern or characteristics common to absentee groups.



## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTATION

#### I. INTRODUCTION

In the study reported here, the interview served as the basic medium for data collection. It was assumed that personal contact with the subjects would increase validity of the data collected. The personal interview allowed the researcher an opportunity to observe the subjects and thereby gain the additional advantage of perceiving their behavior and reaction firsthand.

#### II. DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUMENTATION

This survey consisted of two parts. Part I designed to determine the student's attitudes towards education, school and school policies. Part II was designed to explore the basis (bases) for these attitudes.

The scale used in Part I is called the Attitude Toward Education Scale (refer to Appendix A). Discussion with personnel in several schools supported the decision to use the scale even though it was constructed in 1941. The scale was designed to measure attitudes towards education, school and school practices. One form of the scale, Scale A, was formulated by writing 34 statements about practices in school. Items that suggested more serious, difficult and rigid practices were given odd numbers, and those which suggested easing the pupil's task were given even numbers. Scale B consisted of the same items, but





arranged in different order so that retest scores would be influenced less by carryover from the first administration.

The subjects used in Mitchell's study were 382 students of West Newton High School, Pennsylvania. The students were asked to check each item with which they agreed.

The attitude score on Mitchell's scale is the difference between the number of statements checked which indicated less rigorous attitudes. If the score was positive, the scale was interpreted as revealing a favorable attitude toward education, school and school practices; if it was negative the attitude was presumed to be unfavorable toward education, the school and school practices.

Reliability was estimated by correlating the scores earned on Scale A and those earned on Scale B which was administered twelve weeks later. This test-retest reliability was .71.

The scale was validated by correlating the attitude score with class grades. The assumption was that students who held favorable attitudes toward education, school and school practices, should apply themselves more diligently to their studies and therefore earn higher classroom grades than those pupils who had an unfavorable attitude toward education, school and school practices. These expectations were borne out by the .73 correlation between attitude and class grades.

Two factors affected the selection of Mitchell's instrument for use in the study reported here. First, Mitchell's scale was the only one which measured attitudes towards education, school and school practices. Second, although the instrument was intended to test the hypothesis, it was also used to introduce Part II.





An adjustment was made in the order of Mitchell's items prior to use in the study reported here. It was considered that the subjects would notice the obvious pattern formed by the odd numbered items indicating more rigorous practices and the even numbered items indicating less rigorous practices. The revised scale used consisted of a list of less rigorous practices making up the first section and a list of more rigorous practices making up the second half.

An answer sheet (Appendix B) was constructed to facilitate response indication and scoring.

Although Part II was designed to facilitate expression of personal reactions, the researcher used nine questions which promoted direction and uniformity between the interviews. It was believed that these questions were basic, yet general enough, to achieve the purpose of the study. The following are the nine questions used.

1. What would you say your attitude is toward education, school and school practices?
2. What would you say are the reasons for your having the particular attitude that you have?
3. Would you say that your attitude toward education, school and school practices determines the number of times that you are absent?
4. What have been your reasons for being absent?
5. In what way would you suggest that education, the school and school practices be changed to encourage you to be absent less?
6. What conditions outside of school influence you to be absent?
7. Do you feel that absence from school helps you in any way?  
How?



8. Do you feel that absence from school hurts you in any way?

How?

9. Can you think of anything you can do to reduce the amount of absence on your part?

Discussions associated with each of these questions were recorded on tape for later transcription and analysis.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The following steps were taken in the selection of subjects and conduct of the study reported here:

#### Step One

The school chosen was a composite high school in the City of Edmonton, Alberta. Three administrative divisions: academic, vocational, and business provided nineteen different programs for the 2,457 students enrolled. The staff numbered 149. Students were drawn from various backgrounds and socio-economic levels, although generally, they were of lower middle-class environments. The school itself was situated near the center of the city, in an older section of town.

As a basis of reference for study reported here the following is an outline of the truancy policy used in the school:

A. The first truancy is followed by a warning and a detention.

B. The second truancy is followed by a letter to the parents (Appendix C).

C. The third truancy is followed by a second letter to the parents (Appendix C).

D. The fourth truancy is followed by a third letter to the parents (Appendix C).



E. The fifth truancy is followed by probation (Appendix G).

A condition of acceptance and cooperation was established between the school administration and the researcher. This included: permission for the study to be conducted, access to files and an arrangement with the Pupil Personnel Services for an office in which to conduct the interviews.

### Step Two

A review of school conduct cards provided the identification of the population used. Only thirty-two subjects were identified as absentees according to qualifications set up by the school policy and the school act. That is to say, all students who met the definition of "absentee" used for this study were included in the investigation reported here. The following is a description of subjects used:

- A. There were thirty-two in number.
- B. Subjects were students who were enrolled full time in Grade Ten.
- C. The Subjects were all fifteen years of age.
- D. There were eleven males and twenty-one females.
- E. Of the thirty-two students:
  - 1. Eight were on probation.
  - 2. Two had extensive histories of trancies.
  - 3. One had received a third letter.
  - 4. Five had received a second letter plus subsequent warnings.
  - 5. Sixteen had received a second letter.







F. The students used were distributed throughout five different programs:

1. Twelve were in a general high school diploma program.
2. Six were in a business program.
3. Three were in a four-year matriculation program.
4. Six were in a general technical program.
5. Five were in the foods, arts and beauty culture program.

G. Most of the subjects indicated an overall average and below average standing in their various programs.

H. The students came from a wide range of family environments and socio-economic levels but were generally from average, lower middle-class levels.

### Step Three

A master timetable was constructed which included all of the timetables of the subjects to be used. This provided for immediate location of the subjects at any time.

### Step Four

Scoring sheets for Part I and letters of permission (Appendix D) were duplicated.

### Step Five

The subject was located and called to the office in which the interview was to take place. Students were made aware of the following:

- A. The name and position of the researcher.
- B. The purpose of the study.
- C. The description of Part I and Part II.



### Step Six

After receiving assurance of cooperation from the student the letter asking permission to use a taping device was signed by both the student and researcher. All subjects agreed to cooperate and all signed the letter consenting to the use of a taping device.

### Step Seven

Instructions were given for Part I. These were simply that the student answer either agree or disagree with the statement made.

### Step Eight

As the subject responded according to Step Seven, the researcher recorded the subject's response on the scoring sheet.

### Step Nine

Instructions were given to Part II. These were:

- A. To take time in answering.
- B. To disregard the obvious distraction of the tape recorder.

### Step Ten

The questions of Part II were asked. Usually very little assistance on the part of the researcher was needed, as most students were open and cooperative. On a few occasions it was necessary for the researcher to extend the subject's response with guiding questions so that the student would feel free to express his opinions and ideas.

### Step Eleven

Upon termination of the interview, the researcher made note of his observations and reactions of the student interviewed.



### Step Twelve

Scores for Part I were tabulated and transcriptions of Part II were made in readiness for analysis and interpretation.

## IV. PILOT STUDY

To determine the efficiency of the design before it was actually carried out, a pilot study was conducted within a similar school as was used in the main study. The subjects used were similar to those identified in the main study with the one exception that they were all sixteen years of age.

Seven students were used in the pilot study. The same procedure was used with these students as was scheduled for the main study. The subjects were open and cooperative. A negative attitude toward school and school practices characterized this group. All seven students indicated that education was necessary but that they did not have the motivation necessary to overcome influences that contributed to their truancy.

One major change was made as a result of the pilot study. A dictaphone replaced the tape recorder in order to facilitate better reproduction and transcription.





## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The study reported here was designed to conduct a survey of a particular high school population. The population consisted of students recognized as absentees by school policy. An attempt to investigate absentees along two lines of thought was made. First, it was hypothesized that absentees would express a negative attitude toward education, school and school practices. Second, it was hypothesized that by discussing the question of absenteeism within the context of attitude with the students, certain observable characteristics would emerge.

#### II. PART ONE

Part I was designed to test the hypothesis that there would be a relationship between the absentee population studied and a negative attitude toward education, school and school practices.

The subjects were asked to answer either "agree" or "disagree" to statements read to them by the researcher from Mitchell's Attitude Toward Education Scale.

Table I shows the tabulation of the results of the responses to the statements. The number of students responding to each question was thirty-two.



TABLE I  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO THE ATTITUDE  
TOWARD EDUCATION SCALE  
(IN PERCENTAGE)

Number	Statement	Percentage Agree	Percentage Disagree
<u>SECTION A</u>			
3.	Teachers should do more explaining of the difficult problems.	97	3
15.	Teachers should explain all difficult problems to pupils before they work on them too long and become discouraged.	94	6
12.	When pupils fail in college it is their own fault and the high school should not be blamed for it.	79	21
1.	Pupils should be allowed more freedom to do as they please.	79	21
14.	Discipline in high school should be left almost entirely to the pupil himself since he should be old enough to know why he is in school.	73	27
2.	Lessons should be made easier and plainer.	64	36
8.	Pupils can study without learning how to do it after they once select the work they like.	61	39
11.	Pupils should study only subjects that they feel they will need in later life.	58	42
13.	When pupils fail to prepare their lessons they should not be kept after school because they are wasting their own time.	58	42



TABLE I (continued)

Number	Statement	Percentage Agree	Percentage Disagree
17.	Pupils should not be compelled to make up the work because they are missing their own time and no one else need worry about it.	45	55
16.	Pupils should not be compelled to make up time for being late since they do not lose money by it.	42	58
9.	Knowledge and information change so rapidly that the information gained in school is not so valuable since it is soon out of date.	42	58
7.	Most high school students are overworked and should be relieved of some of it.	33	67
10.	Pupils should study only those subjects that they like.	30	70
4.	There should be no homework assigned.	24	76
6.	People will be able to do the difficult tasks in life when they meet them, no matter whether they have had any practice in school or not.	21	79
5.	Courses should be made so easy that very few students would fail them.	12	88
<u>SECTION B</u>			
6.	Pupils must learn to do difficult tasks in high school if they expect to do college work and succeed in later life.	97	3
11.	Pupils should study some subjects that do not interest them, because they may be necessary, since we do not know when we may need them.	85	15





TABLE I (continued)

Number	Statement	Percentage Agree	Percentage Disagree
9.	Information gained in high school is essential for any kind of work we may wish to pursue.	82	18
12.	In most cases those pupils who fail in college are those who have not learned how to work in high school.	79	21
16.	Pupils who are late should be compelled to make up time so as to learn the habit of being on time when they grow older.	76	24
17.	Pupils who miss a day of school should be required to make up the back work so they do not lose anything.	70	30
7.	Most high school students have too easy a time of it and do not learn to do real work.	70	30
10.	Certain facts and knowledge are necessary for the study of all subjects and these facts do not change very much.	70	30
8.	Pupils learn to study only by doing some real hard studying.	64	36
15.	Teachers should not help pupils in their difficult problems until the pupil asks for help.	42	58
5.	Courses should be so conducted that all those who do not do their best would be left out at the end of the first six weeks.	39	61
2.	Pupils should be required to do more studying.	39	61



TABLE I (continued)

Number	Statement	Percentage Agree	Percentage Disagree
13.	Pupils who fail to prepare their lessons daily should be kept after school to make up this preparation.	15	85
3.	Teachers should not do so much talking and explaining to the class.	12	88
4.	Homework should be assigned for about two hours each evening.	12	88
1.	Discipline in schools should be stricter.	12	88
14.	Discipline in high schools should be more like that of the Army.	6	94

The attitude score was tabulated by finding the difference between the number of "agree" responses to statements which indicated more rigorous attitudes, Section B, and the number of "agree" responses to statements which indicated less rigorous attitudes, Section A.

A simple equation was used to determine whether the student's attitude was positive or negative:

A. If  $B - A =$  a positive number, then the student's attitude was favorable.

B. If  $B - A =$  a negative number, then the student's attitude was unfavorable.

Scores were plotted along a continuum. The profile appears in Figure 1. This profile indicates that:

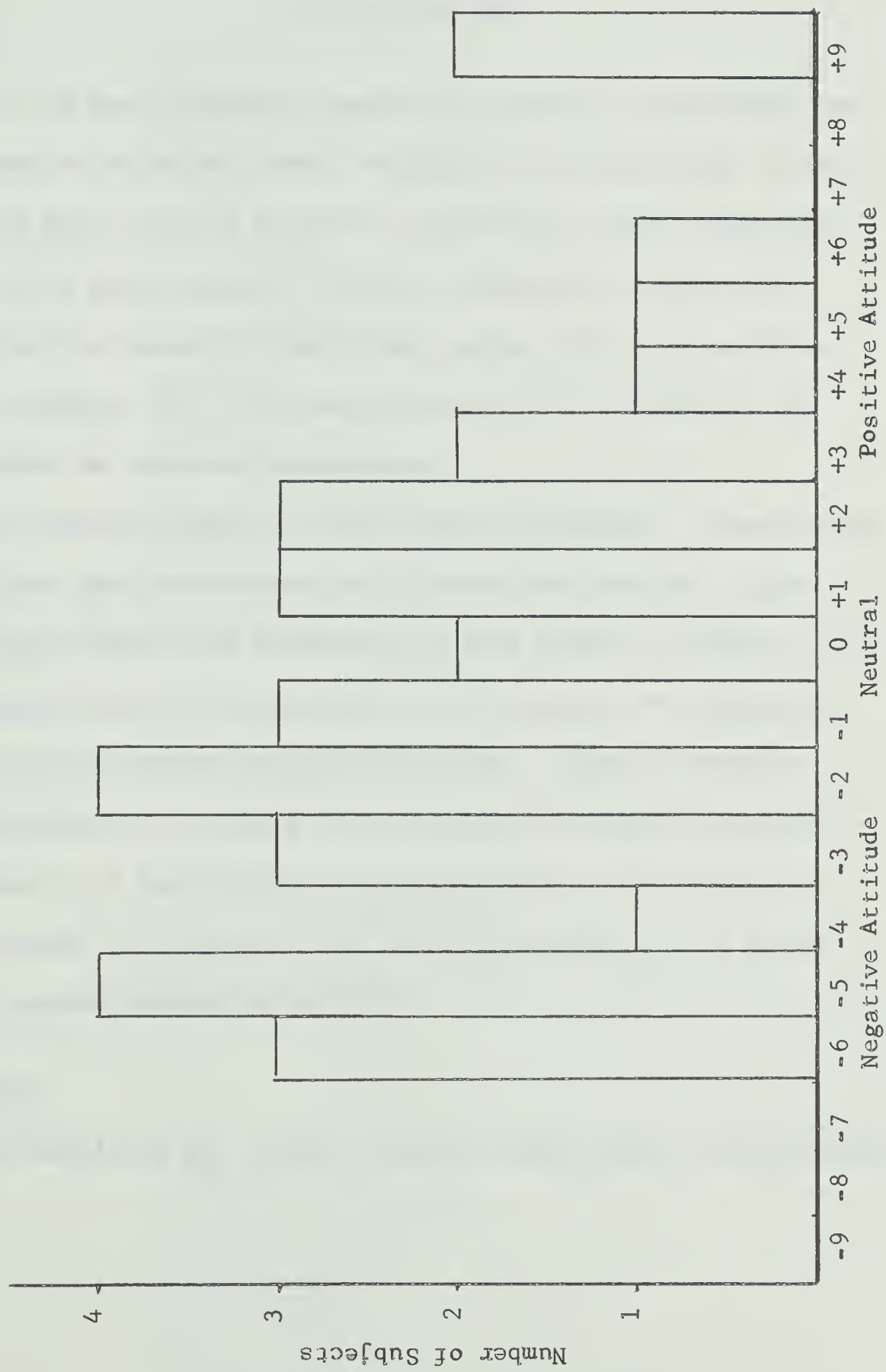


- A. 54.5% of the subjects had negative attitude scores.
- B. 39.5% of the subjects had positive attitude scores.
- C. 6% of the subjects had neither a positive nor a negative attitude score.

For the purposes of this survey all subjects who indicated a positive attitude score were grouped together, and all subjects who indicated a negative attitude score were grouped together. That is to say, a subject with a +1 attitude score was treated the same as, and grouped together with, a subject who scored a +9 attitude score.







DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDE SCORES FROM MITCHELL'S SCALE

FIGURE I



### III. PART TWO

Part Two was designed to explore the feelings responsible for the attitudes of absentees toward education and absenteeism. It was hypothesized that from the responses to Part Two, common observable characteristics might emerge. Opinions, comments and ideas were encouraged as the researcher asked each subject the nine questions outlined in Chapter III. The average length of time required for each interview was twenty-five minutes.

Each question produced a wide range of responses. Some students expressed more than one response to a particular question. These responses were transcribed from the tape (and appear in Tables II to XII) exactly as they were expressed by the subject. No editing or categorization of student responses was made. Judges, therefore, were not necessary to validate the tabulation of student responses. The following is a description of the responses to each question. Responses appear in frequency order from the highest to the lowest with the frequency number at the left.

#### Question One

What would you say is your attitude toward school and education?



TABLE II  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II - QUESTION ONE

Frequency	Response
27	It's necessary.
16	I'm for school.
6	Favorable.
6	Unfavorable.
5	Don't like it.
2	Like school.
2	Want to finish.
1	Don't care for it.
1	It's a good thing.
1	I agree with it.
1	Don't dislike it.
1	Not very good.
1	More for than against.
1	I'm for learning but not for school.
1	For the most part favorable.
1	I don't really like it that much.
1	Basically favorable but changes.

### Question Two

What would you say are the reasons for you having the attitude that you have?

TABLE III  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II - QUESTION TWO

Frequency	Response
9	To get a better job.
4	The way I was brought up.
3	I find it boring.
3	Family problems.
2	I have to go.
2	The teachers.
1	Want to get ahead.
1	Can't get anywhere without school.





TABLE III (continued)

Frequency	Response
1	Courses never come into use.
1	School helps you in many ways.
1	Rather be away from the stuffy school.
1	Don't like working. Just lazy.
1	I never liked school.
1	I'd rather be out working.
1	I'm for learning -- that's all.
1	I like school quite a bit.
1	My friends.
1	The environment.
1	I want to make something of myself.
1	I don't have time for school.
1	I'm not very good at school.
1	If you're going to come it's up to you.
1	I don't like the subjects.
1	I just want to get out on my own.
1	School does not give enough freedom to students.

Question Three

Would you say that your attitude toward school and education determine the number of times that you are absent?

TABLE IV

RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II - QUESTION THREE

Frequency	Response
23	Yes
7	No
2	Not really



Question Four

What have been your reasons for being absent?

TABLE V  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II - QUESTION FOUR

Frequency	Responses
12	Courses are dry.
9	Don't like the teacher.
7	Influence of friends.
7	Don't feel like coming.
6	Homework not done.
5	Better things to do.
5	Weather.
3	There's nothing to do.
2	Just can't hack school.
2	Overtiredness.
1	Don't like school.
1	Don't like to hurry to get any place.
1	Skip to get out for a day or so.
1	It's fun to get out for a day or so.
1	Depends on the subject.
1	Things you want to do with your friends.
1	Just don't want to go.
1	Don't like being pushed into something I don't want to do.
1	It's more fun than going to school.
1	Same routine.
1	So I would be by myself to think.
1	Job.
1	Parents are too easy.
1	A challenge, to see if you can do it and not get caught - to see how far you can go with the administration.

Question Five

What changes would you suggest that the school and education make to encourage you to be absent less?



TABLE VI  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II - QUESTION FIVE

Frequency	Responses
8	Better teachers.
7	Give students more freedom.
5	Better courses.
5	Let students choose courses.
4	Don't really know.
3	More concern for the individual.
2	A smoking room.
2	Not have Social.
2	A more involved program.
2	Have some classes outside.
1	Detentions are good.
1	Leave parents out of school problems.
1	None
1	Longer breaks between periods.
1	Less homework.
1	Not being so strict about being late.
1	More freedom for the teachers.
1	Not having to bring notes.
1	Not having the school phone home to see if you are sick.
1	Don't think it depends on the school. Depends mostly on yourself.
1	If classes weren't so long.
1	They're doing a pretty good job now, but it just doesn't work for some people.
1	Hours should be changed to later in the morning.
1	Four days of school a week.
1	If trouble with English, not to have to take it for three years.
1	Able to transfer if you don't like the teacher.
1	Not to have to take all subjects that we take.
1	School should not be so strict.

#### Question Six

What conditions or circumstances outside of the school encourage  
you to be absent?





TABLE VII  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II - QUESTION SIX

Frequency	Responses
21	My friends.
9	Something better to do.
3	Parents don't care.
3	Don't know.
2	Homelife.
1	Boys.
1	My job.
1	Homework.
1	Rather stay home.
1	Not realizing the importance of education.
1	Not knowing what I want to be.
1	Weather.

#### Question Seven

Do you feel that absences from school helps you in any way? How?

TABLE VIII  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II -  
QUESTION SEVEN - FIRST PART

Frequency	Response
17	No
8	Somewhat
7	Yes



TABLE IX  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II -  
QUESTION SEVEN - SECOND PART

Frequency	Response
5	Gives you a break.
4	Puts you in a better mood.
1	Helped me to learn you can't be absent from school.
1	Gives me a chance to get away and think by myself.
1	It's a kind of a release.
1	Helps me to let go.
1	Helps me to get my homework done.
1	Takes a lot of pressure off me.
1	Gives you a chance to think which you couldn't do in school.
1	Sometimes you learn something else that maybe isn't school work but it could help you base your own opinions on different things.

Question Eight

Do you feel that absence from school hurts you in any way? How?

TABLE X  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II -  
QUESTION EIGHT - FIRST PART

Frequency	Response
17	Yes
8	No
7	Somewhat



TABLE XI  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II -  
QUESTION EIGHT - SECOND PART

Frequency	Response
8	Puts you behind in your work.
7	You miss important learning.
7	Your marks go down.
3	You might have to repeat courses.
2	You're putting responsibility behind you.
2	It shows a poor record for when you want a job.
1	You get your parents on you.
1	Only if you get caught.
1	Especially around exam week because that's when teachers help you a lot.
1	Only when I get a detention.
1	Skiping becomes a habit.
1	You lose on your education.

#### Question Nine

Can you think of anything you can do to reduce the amount of absence on your part?

TABLE XII  
RESPONSES OF SUBJECTS TO PART II - QUESTION NINE

Frequency	Response
6	Make up mind to come.
5	Nothing.
3	Keep thinking about the future.
3	Take an interest in what I'm doing.
2	Just don't skip.
2	Push myself into it.
2	Try to get along with the teachers.
1	Just forget about everything else and come to school.
1	Get my homework done.
1	Not follow the crowd.
1	Set a better example myself.
1	It's going to take the school to do it.





TABLE XII (continued)

Frequency	Response
1	Not encourage my friends to skip.
1	Will power.
1	Just get down to business and quit fooling around.
1	Not think about how much fun you could be having.
1	Really concentrate on what is going on around you.
1	Can't get any more truancies or I'll be cooked.
1	Try to get as much rest as I can.
1	Protest for a smoking room.
1	Just stick with it.
1	Not be so lazy and try to learn.
1	Try to understand my teacher's point of view.
1	Get involved in my work.

Data for both Part I and Part II were gathered from a one-to-one relationship with each of the students. All subjects were cooperative and sincere in regard to their responses. The interview medium served to facilitate a realistic impression for the researcher of the subjects and their responses.

#### IV. SUMMARY

##### A. Part I

The hypothesis of Part I stated that there would be a significant relationship between absentees and a negative attitude toward education, school and school practices. Results of Mitchell's Attitude Toward Education Scale indicate that the majority of absentees interviewed in this study did express a negative attitude toward school and school practices, but not toward education. Part II of the study included the responses of those students who expressed a negative attitude and also those students who expressed a positive and neutral attitude. A negative



attitude was not strongly characteristic of absentees since there was only a fifteen per cent difference in the number of absentees who had negative attitude scores and absentees who had positive attitude scores.

In nearly all of the items the subjects indicated definite opinions regarding the particular statement (refer to Table I, p. 26). That is to say, a clear differentiation was made by the subjects as to whether they "agreed" or "disagreed". This indicates that absentees have definite ideas regarding what is involved in obtaining an education and attending school. These ideas appear concurrent with a realistic way of reasoning in that absentees are aware of the necessity of obtaining an education. The only deviation appears to come within the question of school and school practices.

#### B. Part II

Certain characteristics emerged as being significantly representative of absentees.

From the response to questions one and two (Tables II and III) there is reason to believe that absentees realized the importance of obtaining an education. Their reasoning seemed to be based upon realistic and practical reasons as evidenced by responses to question two (Table III).

Although absentees appeared to understand the necessity for attaining an education, they freely admitted that their attitudes do influence them to be absent. As shown in Table IV, question three, seventy-two per cent supported the preceeding observation.

From responses to question four (Table V), absentees appear to name curriculum and teaching as their reasons for truancy.



The absentees indicate that they would have more responsibility and freedom placed on the individual. As evidenced in question five (Table VI), approximately seventy-two per cent of the absentees responded along the above line of thought.

Another motivating factor which seems to be characteristic of absentees is the influence of friends. Approximately sixty-two per cent of the absentees responded accordingly in question six, (Table VII).

Absentees seem to be aware of the consequences of truancy in hindering their development. As indicated by responses to questions seven and eight (Tables VIII and X), approximately fifty-three per cent of the absentees compared to twenty-two percent confirmed this observation.

From responses to question nine (Table XII), there appears to be no definite direction known to absentees to follow in order to reduce the amount of absence on their part.

In conclusion it may be said that the absentees studied in this survey realized the necessity of obtaining an education despite their negative attitudes towards school and school practices. From responses to Part II there appear to be several factors contributing toward these attitudes, particularly the factors of teaching and curriculum. Although absentees are aware of the consequences of truancy, they fail to attain the strength of motivation from sources other than themselves to overcome influences contributing to their absenteeism.







## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The study reported here was conducted to investigate two lines of inquiry. The first line of inquiry was that absentees would express a negative attitude toward education, school and school practices. Secondly, it was considered that in discussing the problem of absenteeism within the context of attitude with absentees, certain observable characteristics would emerge.

#### II. CONCLUSIONS

It may be concluded from this survey that:

- A. Absentees indicate a negative attitude toward school and school practices but not necessarily toward education.
- B. Absentees indicate that curriculum, teaching and the influence of friends are variables that contribute to the problem of absenteeism.
- C. Absentees have firm opinions on the school and school practices.

#### III. DISCUSSION

From literature reviewed and findings of this survey, it was concluded that no one variable can be used to explain absenteeism.



The majority of absentees studied did in fact harbor a negative attitude toward school and school practices, but did not feel the same way toward education. This would indicate there should be concern of school processes with possible weaknesses therein. There is no reason to think that certain elements of the industrial setting cannot be patterned within the school situation. It is the opinion of the researcher that the concept of human relations as discussed in the review of the literature should provide a basis for a program designed to reduce absenteeism within the school. It is possible to see that such elements as communication, greater responsibility, cooperative activity, management and supervisory organization, individual recognition and teamwork, as described in the review of studies conducted in the industrial setting, can be applied to the school situation. The preceeding is supported by the responses of the students. They indicated that teaching, curriculum and group pressure are significant variables that contribute towards truancy. It is possible that application of various industrial practices within the system of the school will contribute to a change in the variables mentioned and consequently reduce the rate of absenteeism.

Absentees realize the importance of obtaining an education. They realize the consequences of not attending school. Absentees are aware of what is realistic and practical, but they do not have the motivation from factors within the school or themselves to overcome truancy. Several questions arise at this point:

- A. To what extent is there realistic planning and harmony between the need-oriented student and the goal-oriented school?
- B. Absence behavior, if considered a dependent variable, is a product of a reaction consequent from events internal to the absentee in combination with the nature of the organization



and the traits of the personnel within. Should not an evaluation be made regarding the quality of the educational organization and the personnel therein?

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the absentees feel that the individual within the school should have more responsibility and freedom, and since this idea is supported by industrial practices, as mentioned in Chapter II, it is recommended that more responsibility and freedom be provided in the school setting, with the idea that these may provide the necessary motivation for absentees to reduce the amount of absence on their part. Absentees need direction and motivation.

In addition, individual and possibly group reinforcement of an already existing asset; namely, the realization on the part of absentees of the importance and necessity of obtaining an education, in combination with the preceeding suggestion, should assist in the progress toward solution of absenteeism.

The exploitation of industrial practices and consultants could possibly result in various changes within the school setting that could reduce the problem of absenteeism.

#### V. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

It is necessary that more studies be made in regard to particular variables influencing absenteeism so that a composite picture can be formed.

A second suggestion for further studies concerns the parallelism of the industrial organization to the school setting. In what way are the





two similar? What techniques or processes can be taken from the industrial context and applied to the educational setting?



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## APPENDIX A

## ATTITUDE TOWARD EDUCATION SCALE



## APPENDIX A

1. Discipline in schools should be stricter.
2. Pupils should be allowed more freedom to do as they please.
3. Pupils should be required to do more studying.
4. Lessons should be made easier and plainer.
5. Teachers should not do so much talking and explaining to the class.
6. Teachers should do more explaining of the difficult problems.
7. Homework should be assigned for about two hours each evening.
8. There should be no homework assigned.
9. Courses should be so conducted that all those who do not do their best would be left out at the end of the first six weeks.
10. Courses should be made so easy that very few would fail them.
11. Pupils must learn to do difficult tasks in high school if they expect to do college work and succeed in later life.
12. People will be able to do the difficult tasks in life when they meet them, no matter whether they have had any practice in school or not.
13. Most high school students have too easy a time of it and do not learn to do real work.
14. Most high school students are overworked and should be relieved of some of it.
15. Pupils learn to study only by doing some real hard studying.
16. Pupils can study without learning how to do it after they once select the work they like.
17. Information gained in high school is essential for any kind of work we may wish to pursue.
18. Knowledge and information change so rapidly that the information gained in school is not so valuable since it is soon out of date.





19. Certain facts and knowledge are necessary for the study of all subjects and these facts do not change very much.
20. Pupils should study only those subjects that they like.
21. Pupils should study some subjects that do not interest them, because they may be necessary, since we do not know when we may need them.
22. Pupils should study only subjects that they feel they will need in later life.
23. In most cases those pupils who fail in college are those who have not learned how to work in high school.
24. When pupils fail in college it is their own fault and the high school should not be blamed for it.
25. Pupils who fail to prepare their lessons daily should be kept after school to make up this preparation.
26. When pupils fail to prepare their lessons they should not be kept after school because they are wasting their own time.
27. Discipline in high schools should be more like that of the army.
28. Discipline in high school should be left almost entirely to the pupil himself since he should be old enough to know why he is in school.
29. Teachers should not help pupils in their difficult problems until the pupil asks for help.
30. Teachers should explain all difficult problems to pupils before they work on them too long and become discouraged.
31. Pupils who are tardy should be compelled to make up time so as to learn the habit of being on time when they grow older.
32. Pupils should not be compelled to make up time for being tardy since they do not lose money by it.
33. Pupils who miss a day of school should be required to make up the back work so they do not lose anything.
34. Pupils who miss school should not be compelled to make up the work because they are missing their own time and no one else need worry about it.



APPENDIX B  
ANSWER SHEET USED TO RECORD  
RESPONSES TO PART I



## APPENDIX B

SUBJECT # \_\_\_\_\_

1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.
11.	11.
12.	12.
13.	13.
14.	14.
15.	15.
16.	16.
17.	17.

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

$B - A = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if positive (favorable)} \\ 2 & \text{if negative (unfavorable)} \end{cases}$

J.J. Wojcicki  
 May 1968



APPENDIX C

COPIES OF LETTER SENT

TO PARENTS OF ABSENTEES





## APPENDIX C

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ was truant for the second time.

Truancy is a serious offense. If there is a further instance of truancy your son or daughter may be asked to withdraw from school.

Would you please sign this letter and return it to the school, or if you wish you may come to school to discuss this matter. Your co-operation would be very much appreciated.

Yours truly,

Principal

Please sign this letter and return it as an indication that you have received it.

\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX C

Dear

\_\_\_\_\_ has been truant for the third time. You have previously been advised that on this occasion your son or daughter may be suspended from school, but we are referring him/her to our counselling service in an attempt to resolve the problem. Should a further truancy occur it will be necessary for you to come to the school to sign probation papers.

You may arrange for an interview by phoning the school.

Yours truly,

Principal

Please sign this letter and return it as an indication that you have received it.

---



## APPENDIX C

Dear

\_\_\_\_\_ has been truant for the fourth time. You have previously been advised that on this occasion your son or daughter will be suspended from school and may not return until one of the parents comes to the school to sign probation papers. The suspension becomes effective \_\_\_\_\_.

You may arrange for an interview by phoning the school.

Yours truly,

Principal





## APPENDIX C

CONDITION OF READMITTANCE

I admit that, in spite of repeated warnings and with full knowledge of the consequences, I have violated regulations that I knew to be school rules. In particular

If I am permitted to return to school, I agree to observe all the rules of the school, and will co-operate with the staff in every way by being obedient, respectful, and diligent in my studies (as is required by the School Act for Alberta).

I am aware of the fact that a copy of this agreement is on file in the school, and that my parents have received a copy. I also understand that should I cause further trouble of any kind, my parents may be asked to withdraw me from school.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(PUPIL)

\_\_\_\_\_  
H.R.

Witnessed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(PARENT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(PRINCIPAL)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(DATE)



APPENDIX D

COPY OF LETTER CONSENTING

TO THE USE OF A TAPE



## APPENDIX D

The high school has granted permission to conduct a research study to be completed by Mr. J.J. Wojcicki, a post-graduate student at the University of Alberta.

This study calls for the use of a tape recorder to record student's responses for later analysis.

Assurance is given that tapes will be kept in strict, professional confidence. Upon completion of analysis, the responses by the student will be completely erased.

---

J.J. Wojcicki  
Post-graduate student  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta

I, the undersigned, hereby grant permission for the use of a tape recorder only under conditions described above.

---

Student

---

Date











